STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is Somaliland? Why did Israel recognize Somaliland?

International Relations

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GEOGRAPHY

Somaliland is located in the Horn of Africa, on the northwestern coast of Somalia. It borders:

- Djibouti to the northwest
- Ethiopia to the south and west
- Somalia (Puntland region) to the east
- The Gulf of Aden to the north, one of the world's busiest shipping routes
- Its strategic coastline lies near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a critical chokepoint for global trade between Europe and Asia.

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HISTORY

Somaliland was a British protectorate known as British Somaliland until 1960. It briefly gained independence on 26 June 1960, then voluntarily united with Italian Somaliland to form the modern state of Somalia. After years of political marginalization and violence, especially under dictator Siad Barre, Somaliland declared independence in 1991 following Somalia's civil war.

Somaliland has operated as a de facto independent state for over 30 years.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

It has

- Its own constitution
- Elected president and parliament
- Independent currency (Somaliland shilling)
- Functioning judiciary and security forces
- However, no UN member state officially recognizes it, as recognition could encourage separatist movements elsewhere in Africa.

Why did israel recognize somaliland?

Israel recognized Somaliland for strategic, security, and geopolitical reasons, not just diplomatic goodwill. Here's the clear explanation:

1. Strategic Location

Somaliland lies near the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, one of the world's most important shipping routes. By recognizing Somaliland, Israel gains a strategic foothold close to:

- The Bab el-Mandeb strait
- Key maritime trade routes
- Iran-backed militant activity in the region

2. Countering Regional Threats

Israel sees Somaliland as a stable and friendly partner in a volatile region. Recognition helps Israel counter:

- Iranian influence in the Horn of Africa
- Militant groups operating near shipping lanes

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3. Security & Intelligence Cooperation

Somaliland has offered security and intelligence cooperation, including potential access for surveillance and maritime monitoring — important for Israel's national security.

4. Diplomatic Strategy

By recognizing Somaliland, Israel strengthens ties with non-Arab regional partners and expands its diplomatic footprint in Africa, similar to its strategy in Sudan, Morocco, and the UAE.

5. Why It's Controversial

Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 but is not internationally recognized. Israel's move angered Somalia and raised concerns about destabilizing the Horn of Africa.